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in her own house when her husband's attentions to other ladies annoyed her.

"I retired [from her own dinner-table!] to the drawing-room, where I contended an hour or two with my vexation . . . till Johnson and Burke came up. On seeing them, I determined to give a *jobation* to both, but fixed on Johnson for my choice, and asked him if he noticed what passed, what I had suffered, and whether, allowing for the state of my nerves, I was much to blame. He answered, 'Why, possibly not; your feelings were outraged.' I answered: 'Yes, greatly so; and I cannot help remarking with what blandness and composure you witnessed the outrage. Had this transaction been told of others your anger would have known no bounds, but toward a man who gives you good dinners you are blandness and meekness itself.'"

At this, she comments, Johnson colored and both the men looked foolish. On the whole, probably Miss Seward was justified in writing that Johnson's love for Mrs. Thrale was composed of "cupboard love, platonic love and vanity tickled and gratified from morn to night by incessant homage." "He loved her, in fact, for her comfortable home, her good table, her coach and her library, and she loved him for the literary *éclat* his friendship threw about her home." The larger part of this volume is taken up by Mrs. Thrale's heretofore unpublished journal of the tour through Wales with her husband, daughter and Dr. Johnson, during which, she vivaciously observes, she had to be polite for four. The diary is full of detail, charm, quick observation and keen wit and compares favorably with the more ponderous record of the great doctor.

As we turn the last page of Professor Woodberry's "Life of Poe"** and meditate upon what he has told us, the book seems to possess one dominant tone—it leaves a definite feeling of justice done, a careful and exhaustive judicial scrutiny of the facts and an unbiased charge to the jury to weigh with scrupulous care the evidence before returning a verdict for or against Poe. Professor Woodberry has been studiously alert in avoiding many of the pitfalls into which other biographers have fallen, probably the greatest of which is allowing a personal enthusiasm and admiration to creep in and so warp the judgment that the reader receives the testimony of the author with a certain hesitancy. Pro-

* "Life of Edgar Allan Poe." By Professor Woodberry. New York: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1910.

fessor Woodberry does not range himself on Poe's side, "right or wrong," to fight with blind idolatry. Had he done so he would have lost many battles which he has now won.

Looking at a list of our eminent men of letters, it is difficult to select one more urgently in need of an intelligent, diligent and unbiased biographer than Poe. And looking still more closely, the retrospection forces upon us the conviction that it would be difficult to select another where the path of the biographer is strewn with so many and varied obstacles. Poe was so unsatisfactory, his life formed such a network and snarl of contradictions, that it seems almost impossible to unravel it. Hardly a single cord can be loosened and followed without rendering the entire mass more tangled and confused. The events of his life bring to mind those *Æschylean* tragedies in which man is subordinated to a supreme conflict; and his actions, while apparently voluntary, are nevertheless but the exponents of powerful opposing agents swaying him to an irresistible and predestined course. Poe appears as if struggling in some terrific maelstrom (such as he himself has so vividly described) which whirls him onward with ever-increasing rapidity and superhuman power to his doom. Any logical analysis of his character is impossible and Professor Woodberry has wisely not attempted one. It is not difficult to realize why Poe was misunderstood, for he was unique and no one could sound the depths of that strange, mysterious and complex nature. Neither his wife nor Mrs. Clemm understood him, nor did they try to find a solution. They were conscious of but one emotion—they loved him—and the magic of that spell left all else unsought and undesired. So far as any one is able to solve this problem, Professor Woodberry has well and faithfully accomplished the task; and all men, especially the admirers of Poe, are under a lasting debt of gratitude to him for his scholarly research, untiring diligence and impartial sifting of the wheat from the chaff.

If, indeed, Professor Woodberry's opinion of Poe's work, even where that work is most distinguished, is remarkable more for careful and just moderation than for fervor, yet it always bears with it a conviction of sincerity and honesty and is received with the deference which is always due to such opinions. Praise is bestowed graciously where Professor Woodberry believes it is merited, and it is given with a composure and dignity pleasing at

all times, but admirable in a book of this character. The various works of Poe are taken up, reviewed and commented upon. The events of Poe's life are treated in the same way. The testimony is heard in open court, the documentary proof is produced—and it is often of Pantagruelian proportions—nothing is concealed, nothing extenuated. There are no signs of undue haste or vacillation, and one cannot doubt for a moment Professor Woodberry's intimate knowledge and mastery of his subject.

Nearly two generations have passed since the untimely and tragic ending of Poe's life in the hospital at Baltimore; and the sixty intervening years have not dimmed, but enhanced, the lustre of his genius. Sufficient time has elapsed since his death for the exaggerations concerning his habits and weaknesses to assume more normal and just proportions. The chasm which then divided the admirers from the detractors of Poe is being bridged. The Chauvinism of the former has become modified and the prejudices of the latter softened, and Professor Woodberry has revived the cherished hope that our descendants may see the day when those opposing factions meet midway upon this bridge with outstretched hands. We believe that Professor Woodberry has approached very near to that ideal biographer, which he describes in the preface of his book as being perfect in good sense, good-will and discretion.

A brilliant wit, a great beauty and an unhappy woman, it was not to be expected that the Hon. Mrs. Norton* should pass along the human path without being a mark for envy's shafts, a butt for malicious criticism. In these days when women are awaking to the fact that all the loyalty in the world has been the loyalty of men for men and women for men, nothing could be more instructive reading than the sufferings of this great and brilliant woman under the English laws and English social conventions. It speaks well for her gallant heart and high courage, as well as her wit and beauty, that, after all, she was victor in the long and terrible struggle.

Despite all denials, it is difficult in reading this first adequate life of Sheridan's splendid granddaughter not to identify her

* "The Life of Mrs. Norton." By Jane Grey Perkins. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1909.